

THE

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SHEKEL



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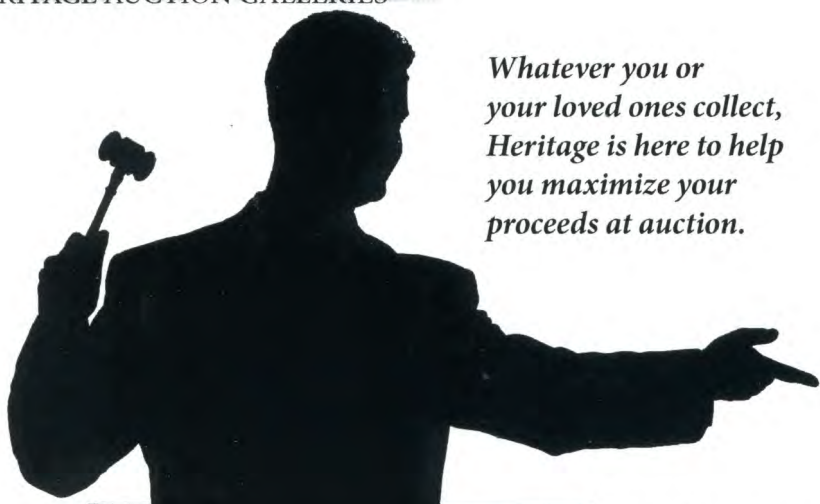
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EDWARD SCHUMAN, EDITOR

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President's Message

by Mel Wacks

ANNOUNCING SPECIAL \$10 GIFT MEMBERSHIPS FOR JUNIORS

AINA wants to help to pass our wonderful hobby on to future generations. So if you give a gift membership to anyone aged 10 to 17, it will cost you only \$10. Each recipient will receive 6 issues of The Shekel plus the annual medal and a note indicating the gift is from you. What a deal!

Sure, it's hard to compete with the Internet, computer games, ipods, cell phones, etc. – but the next generation deserves to also enjoy art, history, and the other joys of our hobby. After you give the gift membership, I suggest that you also give your children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, etc. a few coins or mint sets. They don't have to be valuable. Spend a few minutes and tell them about the coins. But don't be deterred if they don't appreciate it. No one will throw away coins. At worse they will put them in a drawer for now. In 3, 5 or 10 years, these coins will be rediscovered and may encourage some of these young people to do a little research about the symbols on the coins ... or the history of the period when they were made ... or they may actually be inspired to start a collection.

Don't put it off – send us the names, addresses and ages of youngsters who you want to inspire for the next 12 months and beyond (for just \$10 each). Also give memberships for Chanukah, Bar & Bat Mitzvahs, birthdays, etc. The cost is small and the rewards will be great. After all, my father started me off with a small group of coins and reading material when I was 10, and it has given me a lifetime of pleasure!

If you ever have any questions, please feel free to call me at (818) 225-1348 or send email to ainapresident@lycos.com.

Happy collecting



The Editor's Page

By Edward Schuman

In this issue you will find articles of Judaic content that have never been published before. These articles have been created by your editor, who has put in countless hundreds of hours of research in this work. I enjoy doing this as the SHEKEL, for me, is a matter of love.

We are pleased to announce that Ady-Bar-Tov of Richon Le Zion in Israel will be awarded the Ben and Sylvia Odessor Memorial Award at the American Numismatic Convention taking place the end of July. This award was made possible through the generosity of Ben and Sylvia who were strong supporters of A.I.N.A.. They provided the funds for an annual award to be presented for the best literary article publish in the SHEKEL.

Close to my home in South Florida lies Grand Bahamas Island. It is barely 60 miles off the coast of Palm Beach and your editor has been there several times. The photograph on the front cover is of the Luis de Torres Synagogue in Freeport, Grand Bahamas. The synagogue is named after the Jewish interpreter on the first voyage of Columbus to the New World. Grand Bahamas has an unusual Jewish history. The synagogue web site provided the information for the article.

The Diamond industry is one of the most important industries in Israel today. The story of how the diamond industry came to Palestine, and how opposition by the DeBeers cartel, which controls the world's supply of diamonds was finally overcome, makes interesting reading. The refusal of Jewish diamond cutters in Belgium, to save their lives from Nazi terror by immigrating to Palestine is unbelievable.

On May 22, 1934, when the massacre of the Jewish community in Hebron in 1929 was still fresh in memory, the Hebrew daily newspaper Haaretz reminded its readers that pogroms took place in the land of Israel before 1920. The author, Eliezer Rivlin, chose as an example the event known as "The Great Plunder of Safed," which took place 100 years earlier. It began June 15, 1834. This true story is in this issue.

Our president, Mel Wacks has also contributed several articles on recent Israel medals, for which I am appreciative, as it makes my job that much easier.

Till the next issue



Jews in the Bahamas

500 years ago, Luis De Torres set foot on the island of San Salvador, one of the 700 islands comprising the Bahamas. He was Jewish, a Marano, and the interpreter for Christopher Columbus. Today, in Freeport on Grand Bahama Island, stands the Luis De Torres Synagogue, the only Synagogue in the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, and the pride and joy of this small Jewish Community.

On East Sunrise Highway, between the Lutheran Church and the Roman Catholic "Mary Star of the Sea" stands this unique Synagogue. Because of the name Luis De Torres most visitors, of whom there are many, naturally assume that it is a Sephardic Shul. However it is so named for a very different reason, and the Congregation falls under two distinct "umbrellas", as a member of the U.A.H.C., and of the Commonwealth Jewish Council.

Jewish activity in the Bahamas between the 15th century and the present time is uncertain, but the Jewish population has been extremely varied. The island of New Providence (Nassau) has a greater population but no Synagogue. On Grand Bahamas, with a resident membership of about 20, and approximately 30 offshore members, maintains services at least during the winter months and for the High Festivals also.

During a regular Shabbat service the link between the present and the past is related to visitors by the congregation reciting

*In fourteen hundred and ninety two
Columbus sailed the ocean blue
And in his crew there was a Jew
and his name was Luis De Torres.*

The first two immortal lines are taken from a poem entitled "The History of the United States" composed in 1919 by Winifred Sackville Stoner Jr. The third line is added for amusement.

Luis De Torres was engaged by Columbus as the linguist for the fleet of three ships, the Nina, the Pinta and the Santa Maria. The man was supposedly fluent in Arabic, Hebrew, Chaldean, Spanish, Portuguese, French and Latin. He was a Marano, a "damned" or secret Jew who, to escape persecution, and death at the hands of the inquisition, converted to Christianity but, at heart, remained Jewish. He had served a Juan Chacon, Governor of Murcia, as Hebrew interpreter. Murcia having a large Jewish population; but with the forthcoming expulsion he would no longer be required. He was converted from Judaism to Catholicism on August 2nd 1492, so timed to enable him to join the fleet which set sail the very next day.

August 3rd was also an historic day, not only from the standpoint of the fleet sailing out from Palos, but this was also the day that Ferdinand and Isabella signed the order of expulsion of all Jews from the Iberian Peninsula who had not embraced Catholicism. It was also Tisha B'av. Was it merely coincidental that the three ships on that very day raised their anchors to set sail for the "New World"?

At that time there was certainly an awareness of positive Jewish contribution to the events Jews figured prominently in the study of navigational skills such as astronomy and cartography. An Abraham Zacuto invented the Astrolabe, an instrument which enabled Vasco Da Gama to reach the Cape of Good Hope. With respect to the Columbus voyage, naturally there could be no Jewish crew as such, but there were certainly maranos, amongst them the ship's surgeon, the navigator and the cartographer. Finally there was Luis De Torres.

How Columbus, an experienced sailor, but from humble Italian beginnings, convinced Spanish royalty to sponsor the venture is another story. Basically, he had been negotiating for about ten years with very little success. Finally, a Luis De Santangel, keeper of the privy purse (chancellor of the Exchequer) made the argument that since a successful trip would only cost a Title, and that Columbus would be paid on commission, it should go ahead. Ferdinand and Isabella were finally convinced. In fact, had they not been, Santangel himself had offered to finance the whole voyage himself. He was a Marano, and it is ironic perhaps that without the help of a converted Jew the voyage would not have taken place

There has always been an historic molehill waiting to become a mountain, and that is the question of whether Columbus himself was Jewish. Although there has never been any serious evidence for the notion, many historians have touched upon the subject. It was taken up by Vignaud in 1913, Francisco Martinez in 1916, Jacob Wasserman in 1929, and became the pretext for a biography by Madariaga in 1939.

Despite the lack of evidence, the suggestion resurfaced in a book by the famous Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal in 1972 (Sails of Hope). Although there was no doubt that he was a Catholic, he came from, and was most likely born in Genoa. His parents were a "New Christian" family which, in the 15th century, often meant Previously-Jewish, and most likely of Spanish extraction.

The Jewish Community of Grand Bahama is dedicated to maintaining its beautiful Shul, a white stucco building set amidst palm trees, pine trees and flowering shrubs. Services are maintained throughout the winter and up to Pesach when a communal Seder is organized.

Three numismatic items illustrate this article. The first is the Jewish American Hall of Fame medal of the Jews responsible for voyage. The second is a medal of Christopher Columbus. Both the above were sculpted by Jewish artist Paul Vince. The third item is a Bahamas 10 dollar commemorative coin of 1973, which shows the flagship of the Columbus expedition.



The Tokens of Johannes Pross

By Ady Bar-Tov

Johannes Pross was one of the first Templers who settled in the German Colony in Haifa in 1870. He built his home on the corner of Hameginim and Ha'carmel Blvd., which is today known as Ben Gurion Blvd, in downtown Haifa. Towards the end of the 19th century he began the business of operate lodges.

The first lodge, with a combination of a bar and restaurant, he opened in his own home. In 1892, he opened another lodge bar-restaurant on the Mount of Carmel. This became a meeting place for many of the high ranking officials of the Turkish administration, the Baron Rothschild's- Palestine Jewish Colonization Association (PJCA) officials, the Baron Hirsch' Jewish Colonization Association(JCA) officials as well as local intellectuals.

It lasted in this form untill the first World War. The building was sold to the Rothchilds and was called "Beith Rothshild" (The Rothshild's House), which it is known as untill today. Johannes Pross was not interned by the British government before World War II, and was not deported to Australia with other German citizens. He continued to operate the lodge and the restaurant-bar in downtown Haifa till his death. After then and up to the end of the British Mandate in 1948, his sons continued to operate the business serving the officers of the British Army. After the establishing of the State of Israel, the lodge became a coffee shop to serve the soldiers of the Jewish army. Today, it is no longer a coffee shop or restaurant, but a private electrical store.



Until the present time we know of only one token, struck in aluminum, with the denomination 20, and without a unit value. As the token reads Syrien, Mrs. Sylvia Haffner presumed that it was issued during the Ottoman rule, when the nomenclature "Palestine" did not exist and the area was generally known as "Southern Syria". Hence, the unit of value is probably the Turkish Para.

The tokens were supposed to be a substitute for small change, to be used by the guests of the lodge or the restaurant-bar, but the exact use of

the tokens is still unknown. Other denominations may have existed.

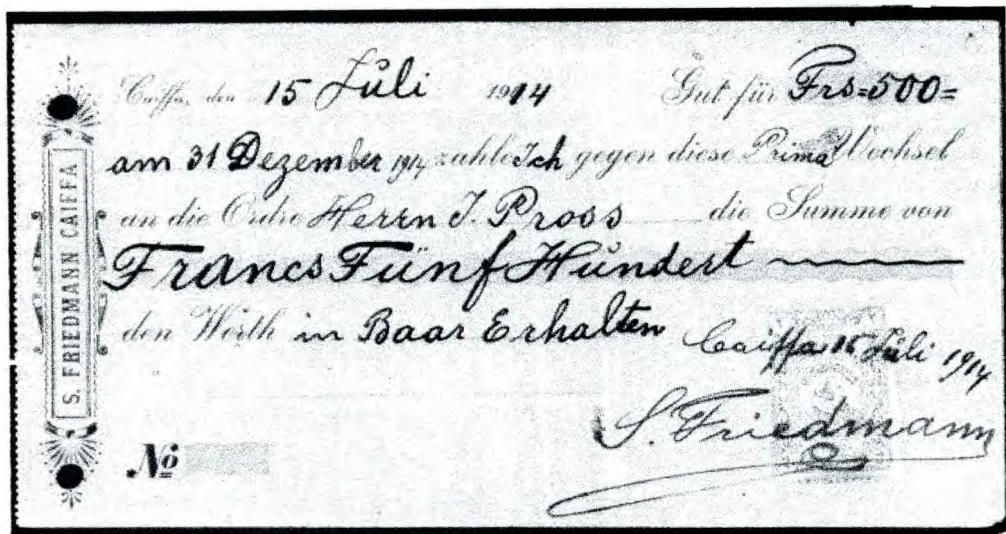
The token alloy is aluminum. Diameter: 22 mm. Weight: 1.28 gr. Obverse: J. PROSS. In the center, the inscription HAIFA, below, opposite each edge, a small flower with five petals. At the bottom, in half a circle the inscription: SYRIEN.

Reverse: In the center, the denomination, 20 surrounded by a pearly circle.

The S. Freedmann Bank was a Templer owned bank which operated in Haifa. The illustrated check dated 15 July 1914 was payable to J. Pross in the amount of 500 francs. The text is in German.



LOCATION OF J. PROSS' LODGE IN HAIFA



THE STORY OF THE PALATIN HOTEL

BY ADY BAR-TOV

The Palatin Hotel was built in 1926 at the south-west corner of Ahad Ha'am and Nahalat Benyamin Streets in Tel Aviv. The initiative to build the most luxurious hotel at that time in Tel Aviv, came from Dr. Mazia and his son in law Zvi Izakson, in 1925. The name of the hotel was chosen by Dr. Mazia, who was, in addition to being a medical doctor, a lawyer and an engineer, also a philologist. His choice was "*Palatin*" which translates to palace in Greek, adapted by the Hebrew language. The hotel was designed by the famous Jewish architect Borvald, who also designed the Hebrew Technical Institute the Technion and the educational complex of elementary and secondary schools Ha' Gimnasia Ha'realit, located in Haifa, in a combined Eastern and European style.

The hotel's outside was unique, and the inside was decorated in a very high standard. Many historical meetings were held there, and important guests and major functions were staged there.

A partner to the erecting of the hotel and afterwards its manager was a Russian Jew whose name was Bersky, who was involved in the hotel business. Bersky owned two additional hotels in Jerusalem called The Palace and the Hotel Fast. Bersky managed the Palatin Hotel through his assistant, an Egyptian Jew by the name of Sam Azgoor from 1926 up to 1932.

In 1932, Bersky went bankrupt. He and his assistant were pushed out of the management and Bersky from the partnership of the hotel. The management returned to the Izakson family. They continued to operate it alone for one more year in 1933. After 1934, the hotel was leased to a refugee Jew who recently immigrated from Germany whose name was Herman Schlossberg. Schlossberg was the father of Leah Rabin, wife of Yitzhak Rabin. Schlossberg managed the hotel until its closure in 1938. In that year, the hotel was turned into a trade and office building.

In 1944, the building was appropriated by the British regime from the Izakson family, and became an hotel-club for military officers until 1947 when it was returned to the Izakson family. Since then, the hotel serves as an office building.

Because of the shortage of small change, the management of the Palatin issued a series of tokens to be used internally by the guests, for their convenience, to obtain different services inside the hotel, and to give

tips. The tokens were probably issued by Sam Azgoor, between the years 1926 and 1932, when he managed the hotel.

The tokens had five different denominations: 1/2 P, 1P, 2P, 5P and 10 Piastres. The tokens were minted out of a brass alloy. All the tokens differ in size, with the bigger denominations being the largest. On all the obverses appears the denomination on the left, and a small capital letter P for Piaster, with a large dot beneath, on the right. On all the reverses there appears the inscription: PALATIN HOTEL, in English in a full circle and a small rhombus between the start and the end of it. In the center there is a flower with eight petals. Both sides of the tokens have a pearled rim. The tokens ceased to be valid currency in 1932, when Bersky and Azgoor were pushed out of the management.

There is no documentation about the mint or the mintage. A complete set of all denominations of the Palatin Hotel issues is shown below.



PALATIN HOTEL, TEL AVIV

JARMULOWSKY'S BANK

At the southwest corner of Canal and Orchard Streets on the lower east side of New York City is the impressive formal entrance to the bank Sender Jarmulowsky founded in 1873 and housed in a twelve storey building he built around 1895. The building still stands today and engraved in stone is the name S. Jarmulowsky Bank. The bank occupied the first two floors of the building with the upper loft floors rented out. At the time of its construction, it loomed over the surrounding area and could be seen from blocks away.

So impressive was the building that a toy "still bank" entitles Jarmulowsky's Bank was made around this time. This bank has become a collectors item and is valued at around \$1500 today.

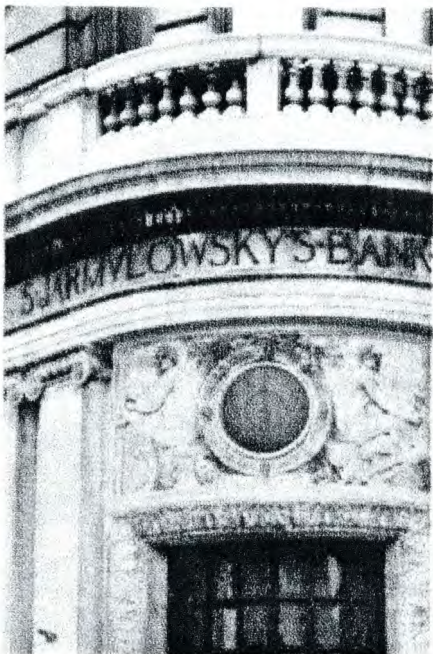
Jarmulowsky's rise was one of those success stories that dazzled and emboldened the hardworking poor of the old neighborhood. He began as a pushcart peddler selling goods to the poor out of the street. He rose to become a custom peddler when he started selling goods on time payments to steady customers; a bedroom set, a linen tablecloth for the Sabbath, silverware, perhaps silver candlesticks etc. Jarmulowsky soon opened a "passage and exchange" office, where he bought steerage passages in bulk and offered his customers a chance to "pay out" the cost of bringing their relatives from the other side precisely the way they bought material things. He also exchanged hard-earned dollars for Russian rubles, Austrian hellers Italian that the workers of the ghetto sent back home. Extending credit, operating in the foreign currency markets, branching out to taking deposits, buying mortgages—a banker. Jarmulowsky knew most of his customers personally and extended credit even to those with doubtful credit. His bank served the common people as no other would.

In August 1914, with war impending in Europe, there was a run on his bank as depositors withdrew money to send to relatives overseas in the hopes of bringing them to America before the war broke out. Jarmulowsky's bank failed.

It was presumed that Jarmulowsky was a millionaire, perhaps even a multi-millionaire but he left an estate valued on the day of his death, at \$501,053, according to the report completed by Appraiser Goldenkranz. The property of the banker was reduced by debts and administration expenses to \$446,660.72.

The illustrated Jarmulowsky check, dated October 8th, 1912, was issued in English currency 20 pounds 8 shillings and 2 pence. It was

payable to Naftola Yigdoll in Palestine. The correspondent bank was the Anglo Palestine Co. Bank in Jaffa, The English currency was converted in to French Francs 502.05 which was one of the currencies most used in Palestine at that time.



Jewish Paper Money in Minsk

During the 16th century Jews began to settle in the town of Minsk. In 1579 King Stephen Báthory granted the Jews of Minsk a charter, but in 1606 King Sigismund III prohibited Jews from opening shops there or engaging in commerce. In 1633 King Ladislaus IV confirmed the rights of the Jews of Minsk and permitted them to acquire real estate on the market square or anywhere else, and to buy land for a new cemetery.

During the Chmielnicki revolt and the Russian-Polish War which followed it, the Jews of Minsk were among those who suffered. In 1679 King John III Sobieski confirmed their right to the ownership of houses and shops, their synagogue and cemetery, and restated their freedom to engage in commerce and crafts and their exemption from all jurisdiction excepting that of the king. These rights were confirmed in their entirety by King Augustus II in 1722. Hence the community of Minsk prospered during the 17th and 18th centuries in spite of the opposition of the townspeople.

In 1766 1,322 Jewish poll tax payers were registered in Minsk. Jews were prominent in the town's commercial life and at the fairs of nearby Mir and Kapulia. The spiritual life of the community was also enriched. In 1685 a yeshivah (religious Torah school) was established by the local rabbi.

In the framework of the Councils of the Lands, Minsk was subordinated to Brest-Litovsk (Brisk) in 1623, but by 1631 Minsk and its surrounding district was considered a separate province. In czarist Russia, the province of Minsk was one of the "western" provinces of the Pale of Settlement. In 1797 its gubernator presented Czar Paul I with the resolutions of the meetings of the province noblemen, who alleged that the Jews were responsible for the sorry plight of the peasants of the province and for the famine which then raged. This statement was the forerunner of the program to expel the Jews from the villages, which later took the form of the "Jewish Statute" of 1804..

In 1847 there were 37 Jewish kahal administrations, in which 87,633 Jews were registered. During the 19th century, Minsk was one of the largest and most important communities in Russia. In 1847 the Jewish population numbered 12,976, rising to 47,562 (52.3% of the total population) in 1897, probably also by migration into cities, which made Minsk the fourth largest community in the Pale of Settlement.

Minsk was one of the places where the Jewish labor movement originated and developed. In the mid-1870s circles of Jewish Socialists

were organized, which were very active during the 1880s and 1890s. On Jan. 1, 1896, the Jews of Minsk numbered 43,658.

There were about forty synagogues and numerous houses of prayer. Five of the synagogues belong to the Jewish community, the others being controlled by separate congregations or belonging to private individuals. Among the numerous yeshibot the more important were: Blumke's yeshibah, the Little Yeshibah, and the yeshibah at the Synagogue of the Water-Carriers.

The expenditure of the Talmud Torah amounted to 4,355 rubles (1885). In 1879 a Jewish trade-school was established in Minsk with locksmiths' and carpenters' departments and instruction was offered also in general subjects, in Hebrew, and in religion. In 1885 the school had 112 apprentices, and it expended 5,912 rubles. The Jewish hospital, founded in 1829, had accommodations for seventy patients; its expenses amounted in 1885 to 8,068 rubles. The Jewish poorhouse, with eighty beds, had an expenditure of 5,356 rubles in the same year. Besides, there were many charitable associations, of which the more important were a society for the assistance of students of the Talmud, with an expenditure of 3,000 rubles (1885); a society for the assistance of the indigent sick, with an expenditure of 1,500 rubles (1885), and a society (founded about 1820) for the distribution of bread among the poor, with an expenditure of 3,310 rubles (1884).

In 1895 a convention of Jewish Socialists was held in Minsk, which discussed the projected establishment of a Jewish Socialist Federation. The Jewish Socialists of Minsk sent delegates to the founding convention of the Bund in 1897, and Minsk became one of the centers of the Bund's activities, being the first seat of the movement's central committee until 1898, when it was dispersed by the police.

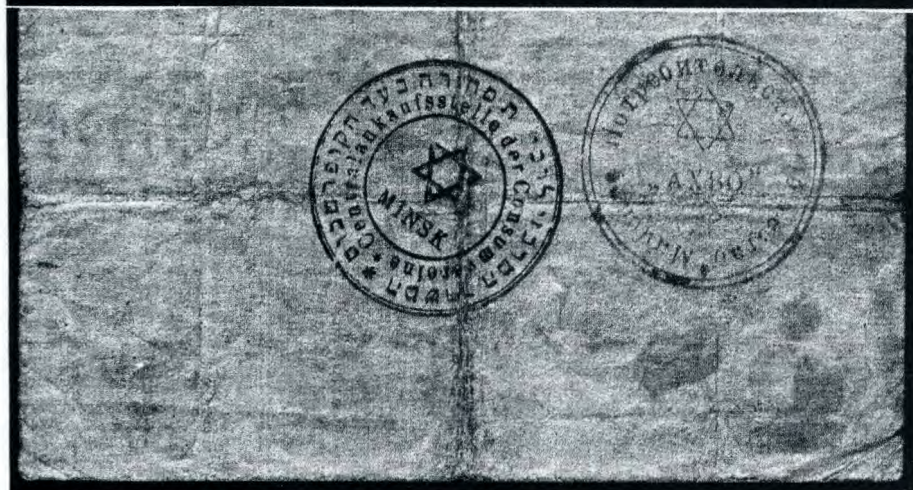
From 1901 to 1903, Minsk likewise became the center of the activities of the Independent Jewish Workers' Party. Jews were predominant in the demonstrations and revolutionary meeting held in the town in 1905 and were also the principal victims of the riots directed against liberal elements in general which took place in October 1905.

Between 1917 and 1920, the time of the Russian revolutions and civil wars and governments changes, in cities that lacked official means of payment, there appeared a new form of currency. Money had been printed by municipal governments, mutual aid societies, cooperatives, religious organizations etc. These local currency issues usually circulated within the society. Outside of the society such notes did not necessarily have acceptance as payment. However communities readily used these

notes since the frequent changes in political authority meant that government issues could be discontinued while these issues would continue in circulation.

The Central Office of the Cooperatives in Minsk issued notes that were printed only in Hebrew. These notes could be used at any of fourteen different Jewish cooperatives. The Hebrew text reads "Against this note the owner will goods in the amount of (denomination) from Ahava, Ahiezer, Baalei-Melacha, Hehaver, Merkaz, Ezra, Hapoel, Kadima, Ahdut and Shalom.

The reverse side of the notes contain two rubber stamped seals. Minsk United Cooperatives is the same on each note. The second stamp contains the cooperative name. The notes were issued in denominations of 50 kopeks, one, three and five rubles.





Ark of the Covenant

Featured on Second Medal in Cities of Israel Series

By Mel Wacks

Indiana Jones would be happy to find the "lost Ark" featured prominently on the new medals of Beit Shemesh, the second issue in the Cities of Israel series. The bible indicates that Beit Shemesh was the first city encountered after the Ark of the Covenant was captured and then returned by the Philistines: "And they laid the Ark of the Lord upon the cart ... and took the straight way to the way of Beth-chemesh... And the cart came into the field of Joshua, a Beth-shemite, and stood there" (I Samuel 6).

The medal depicts a modern sculpture of the Ark by artist Afik Peli, that is located in the Beit Shemesh Sculpture Garden. Around it is the Hebrew inscription: "And they of Beit Shemesh were reaping ... and saw the ark, and rejoiced," also from I Samuel 6. Peli's sculpture interprets the original Ark that was 2 ½ cubits (4 feet 2 in.) long, with width and height of 1 ½ cubits (30 in.), over which were two cherubim with outstretched wings. Two golden rings were attached on each side, into which were inserted staves for carrying the Ark. The wheels shown in the sculpture were not part of the original Ark, but may be one of the "10 bases of brass" ordered by Solomon for the holy objects in his temple. Not shown, but understood, is that within is the Ark of the Covenant is a pair of tablets containing the 10 Commandments.

Behind the Ark sculpture on the medal is the Beit Shemesh Educational Center. The common reverse of all the medals in the Cities of Israel series is an urban landscape, the emblem of the State of Israel, and the emblem of the Union of Local Authorities in Israel. The number 3300 refers to the fact that the sons of Aaron the Priest resided in Beit Shemesh 3,300 years ago.

Beit Shemesh is located in the Biblical heartland of Israel – nearby David fought Goliath, Samson was born there, and it is where Stephen, the first Christian martyr, is buried. As the largest city in the area between Jerusalem and the coastal plain, Beit Shemesh serves as a medical and cultural center for the many kibbutzim, moshavim and small towns in the area. The city has a widely recognized music conservatory, and a number of its students have gone on to win international prizes. Modern Beit Shemesh's population is approximately 88,000 residents, including 20,000 English speakers, plus recent Russian and Ethiopian immigrants joining those originally from Romania, Iraq, Iran and Morocco.

The Beit Shemesh medals are available in bronze (39mm., 26.8 gm., limited to 3,000), silver (39mm., 31.1 gm., .999 fine, limited to 500), and gold (30.5mm., 17 gm., 14kt., limited to 120). Collectors placing a standing order to receive all of the Cities of Israel medals as they are issued at the rate of 6 per year pay reduced prices, and will receive a free album to house the entire collection. See the order form you will receive from the the Israel Government Coins & Medals Corporation for special discounted prices on each medal in the Cities of Israel series. For further information, write to the Israel Government Coins and Medals Corp., PO Box 7900, Jerusalem 91078, Israel or go to www.isragift.co.il.



Qiryat-Gat is Third Israeli City Commemorated in New Series

By Mel Wack

Israel has one foot in the 21st century and the other in Biblical times, as illustrated by the city of Qiryat-Gat. This modern city of over 50,000 was named for Gath, one of the five major cities of the Philistines, that was unearthed nearby by archaeologists. Gath was the hometown of the biblical giant Goliath the Gittite. Today, Qiryat-Gat is the home of one Intel fabrication plant making Pentium 4 chips, and a second facility is scheduled to open later this year.



The Qiryat-Gat medal is the third in the new Cities of Israel series, that was inspired by the American State Quarters series. The obverse features the emblem of the city and the "Weeping Harp" sculpture. The municipal emblem consists of a wall, cogwheel and plant. The wall is symbolic of the security which is given to the population by the town and also as a reminder of the walls built by Rehavam, King of Judaea. The cotton plant represents the former textile industry, and the cogwheel represents the



renewed local manufacturing industry. The colors of the emblem are green, recalling the green fields in whose heart the town is situated, and red, memorializing those who were killed in the War of Independence and liberating the area from Egyptian occupation.

The impressive "Weeping Harp" sculpture stands 7 meters tall in the Central Park of Qiryat Gat. It was donated by the late British-Jewish Holocaust survivor sculptor Fred Kormis and built by the sculptor Amnon Ben Menashe in memory of the victims of the Holocaust and their heroism. The harp-shaped concrete monument was completed on May 5, 1978 and officially inaugurated on Holocaust Day 1979. At the top of the harp is the Hebrew letter "Shin" standing for **Shaddai** (G-d), **Shema Israel** (Hear o Israel) **Shoah** (Holocaust), and **Shisha** (Six Million).

The harp plays the opening notes of the traditional prayer said in memory of the dead: *"O G-d, full of mercy, who dwells on high, grant proper rest on the wings of the divine presence. In the lofty levels of the holy and the pure ones who shine like the glow of the firmament. For the souls of those who went on to their world. May their resting place be in the Garden of Eden. Therefore may the master of mercy shelter them in the shelter of his wings for eternity and may he bind their souls in the bond of life. G-d is their heritage and may they repose in peace on their resting places."*

The reverse of the Qiryat Gat medal and all of the others in the Cities of Israel series, features the name and logo of the Union of Local Authorities in Israel. In 1953, the three largest cities - Jerusalem, Tel Aviv-Yafo and Haifa joined the organization and the name was changed to ULAI. The General Assembly of ULAI comprises all the mayors in Israel who automatically become members of the Union as soon as they are elected. The ULAI now represents 61 Israeli cities and towns and 150 Local Councils. It advises Local Authorities in municipal matters including education, welfare, economy, water, security, women's' issues, labor relations and the law. The ULAI maintains contacts with Local Government organizations abroad and encourages partnerships with Sister Cities. The Union of Local Authorities in Israel was established in 1938 under the name "The League of Local Councils."

The Qiryat Gat medals are available in bronze (39mm., 26.8 gm., limited to 3,000), silver (39mm., 31.1 gm., .999 fine, limited to 500), and gold (30.5mm., 17 gm., 14kt., limited to only 74). For ordering information, contact the Israel Government Coins and Medals Corp., PO Box 7900, Jerusalem 91078 or email medals@coins.co.il. Be sure to indicate that you are a member of AINA to obtain special discounted prices.

Jewish Orphanages in Amsterdam

A ribbon of stone runs along the ground near the river Amstel close to where today the Opera House and Town Hall building stands. It recalls the Jewish orphan children, almost a hundred of them, and three caretakers who in March 1943 were deported from Jewish Orphan Boys' Home, Megadlé Jetomim. The Germans sent them to the concentration camp of Sobibor where they were all killed.

Megadlé Jetomim, meaning, those who care for the orphans, was founded in 1738 by the Ashkenazi community. Initially the orphan children growing up in Jewish families had their food, clothing and education paid for, but when in the 19th century, fewer families appeared willing to take on this task, it became necessary to build an orphanage.

The first home opened in 1836 on Zwanenburgerstraat, a street which no longer exists. In 1865 the new orphanage was opened on the Amstel and the corner of Zwanenburgerstraat; it was designed by Cornelis Outshoorn (1810-1875), who was also the architect of the Amstel Hotel.

After the war, the orphanage reopened, this time as a home for boys who wanted to get to Israel. It successfully placed many orphans in Israel before closing in 1955. Only the outline of the building remains today, as a memorial to the orphans and the caretakers who died in Sobibor. The rest was demolished in 1977 to make way for the Metro and later for the new Town Hall and the Muziektheater.

Two houses on Rapenburgerstraat in Amsterdam's Jewish quarter were formerly home to the Jewish orphan girls of Amsterdam (1861-1943). The *Netherlands Israelite Orphan Girls' College* existed from 1761 and had as motto 'The care of orphan girls is one of the good deeds'; indeed, this is engraved on one of the stones of the façade of number 171. Initially, the College gave financial support to families who brought up orphan girls. By about 1861 it was clear that an orphanage was needed and the house at number 171 Rapenburgerstraat was used for this purpose.

The girls were given an Orthodox Jewish education and taught household skills in order to gain employment as maidservant or seamstress. After about 1930 they were trained as nurses, secretaries or school teachers. Everyone in the house was forced to evacuate by the Nazi occupiers on 10 February 1943.

Today the building has been turned into apartments. Together, the present occupants and the Society of Friends of Amsterdam Historic House Plaques undertook to restore and replace the original façade. During the war the Hebrew texts had disappeared beneath the façade and the roof ridge. In 2003 these were unveiled in their former state by Hannah Belliot, alderman for Culture. Thanks to the above-mentioned Society, the Hebrew text adorning the façade of Fernandes Nunes House at 16 Nieuwe Kerkstraat, formerly a Jewish home for the elderly, and that at 33 Nieuwe Herengracht, formerly a home for elderly Jewish men have also been restored.

A medal was issued to commemorate the opening of the new building of the Jewish orphanage for boys in Amsterdam, on April 30, 1865. The beautiful obverse portrays a lady caretaker holding two orphans. The reverse portrays the building with Dutch inscriptions. The engraver of this medal was J. Elion. In your editor's opinion this is one of the most emotional and heart rendering medals ever issued.



David Sassoon

The Rothschilds of the Far East

David Sassoon was born in Baghdad into a family of Nasis, traditional leaders of the Jewish community. His father, Saleh Sassoon, was a wealthy banker and chief treasurer to the pashas, the governors of Baghdad, from 1781 to 1817. Following the footsteps of his father, David Sassoon served as the treasurer under Ahmet Pasha, the governor of Baghdad at the time. Ahmet Pasha became implicated in a corruption scandal and Sassoon and his family fled for safety in 1829, and finally settled in Bombay with some of the family's wealth in 1833.

Sassoon started business in Bombay with a counting house and an opium business. He was soon one of the richest men in Bombay. By the end of the 1850s, it was said of him that silver and gold, silks, gums and spices, opium and cotton, wool and wheat - whatever moves over sea or land feels the hand or bears the mark of Sassoon and Company.

Sassoon expanded his opium trade into China and Japan. He placed his eight sons in charge of the major opium exchanges in China. He employed only Jews in his business, and wherever he sent them he built synagogues and schools for them. He imported whole families of fellow Jews . . . and put them to work.

Sassoon's sons were busy pushing this mind-destroying drug in Canton, China. Between 1830 and 1831 they trafficked 18,956 chests of opium, earning millions of dollars. Part of the profits went to Queen Victoria and the British government. In the year 1836 the trade increased to over 30,000 chests and drug addiction became endemic in coastal cities.

In 1839, the Manchu Emperor ordered it stopped and named the Commissioner of Canton, Lin Tse-hsu, to lead a campaign against opium. Lin seized 2,000 chests of Sassoon opium and threw it into the river. An outraged David Sassoon demanded that Great Britain retaliate. Thus, the Opium Wars began with the British Army fighting as mercenaries of the Sassoons. They attacked cities and blockaded ports. The Chinese Army, decimated by 10 years of rampant opium addiction, proved no match for the British Army. The war ended in 1839 with the signing of "The Treaty of Nanking." This included provisions especially designed to guarantee the Sassoons the right to enslave an entire population with opium. The "peace treaty" included the following provisions: Full legalization of the opium trade in China, compensation from the opium stockpiles

confiscated by Lin of 2 million pounds, Territorial sovereignty for the British Crown over two hundred offshore islands.

Although David Sassoon did not speak English, he became a naturalized British citizen in 1853. He kept the dress and manners of the Baghdadi Jews, but allowed his sons to adopt English manners. His son, Abdullah changed his name to Albert, moved to England, became a Baronet and married into the Rothschild family.

Owing to his benefactions, Sassoon's name was familiar to all the Jews of Turkey, China, Japan, Persia, and India. In Bombay he built and munificently endowed a splendid synagogue in the central business called the Fort area after the long-vanished British fortifications around the harbor which were built in the seventeenth century.

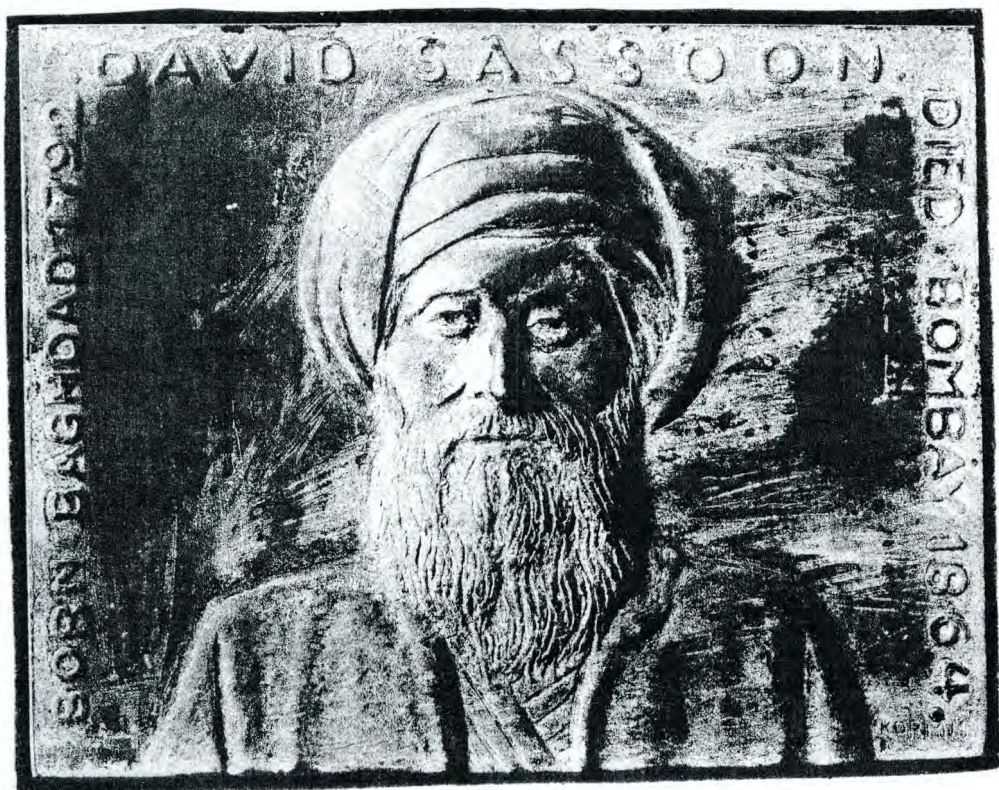
David Sassoon built the Magen David Synagogue in 1861 in Byculla, where the family first lived. This was then the best location in Bombay before other areas were developed. The large synagogue was set in extensive grounds, which were to prove very valuable. Built in the spacious style of Victorian architecture, it was fronted by pillars and a clock tower. David Sassoon also built an elementary school on one side in the same large compound to provide an education for the community's children in Torah and proper behavior. This was later expanded into a high school by his grandson Jacob Sassoon, and renamed "The Sir Jacob Sassoon Free High School". The synagogue and school grounds became in effect a community center for the Jewish community of Byculla, where young and old would meet together in the evenings.

He also established a Talmud Torah school; and at Puna, his summer residence, he built another handsome synagogue. He subscribed liberally to the Sailors' Homes in Bombay and Hong Kong, to the famine fund, to the fund for the widows and orphans of those killed during the Indian Mutiny of 1857, and to the Lancashire relief fund. He supported an institution for teaching English, Arabic, and Hebrew; and shortly before his death he set apart a large sum for the erection of a Mechanics' Institution at Bombay, which is called by his name. One of the most important of his public institutions is the Sassoon Reformatory and Industrial Institution for Juvenile Offenders. Sassoon built and endowed the Infirm Asylum at Puna; and another charitable institution erected by him was the General Hospital at Puna, founded in 1863, for all castes and creeds.

In appreciation of Sassoon's philanthropic labors the citizens of Bombay placed a marble bust of him in the Victoria and Albert Museum, to which he had presented an illuminated clock-tower. His last public act was the erection of a statue in memory of Albert, prince consort.

David Sassoon was conscious of his role as a leader of the Jewish community in Bombay. He helped to arouse a sense of Jewish identity amongst the Bene Israeli and Cochin Jewish communities. The Sassoon Docks (built by his son) and the David Sassoon Library are named after him. David Sassoon died in his country house in Pune in 1864. His business interests were inherited by his son.

The illustrated metallic plaque of David Sassoon was commissioned for the Great Jewish Portraits in Metal by Samuel Friedenberg for the Jewish Museum in New York. The artist was F.J. Kormis.



REMBRANDT'S PAINTING OF THE JEWISH BRIDE

It has become increasingly common to find Rembrandt described as a 'Jewish' artist. There are various factors accounting for this. For many years Rembrandt lived and worked in the heart of Amsterdam's Jewish quarter; many of his paintings depict biblical scenes and he introduced written Hebrew words into some of his works. From the nineteenth century on a number of the characters he had painted were considered to be Jews. But is there any basis for such beliefs? A new exhibition titled The 'Jewish' Rembrandt assembles masterpieces from Rembrandt's work, juxtaposing them with comparable works by other masters and interspersing them with documentary evidence and reproductions. In this way the Jewish Historical Museum sets out to unravel the mystery and explain the myth.

Rembrandt, son of a Leiden miller, was born on July 15, 1606. His parents expected him to enjoy a university education, however, Rembrandt was to choose a different career. He was apprenticed to Leiden master Jacob van Swanenburgh and had his first studio in this city. In Leiden he made his first historical paintings and self-portraits. In 1631 Rembrandt moved from Leiden to Amsterdam. He soon became a man of standing here and prosperous days dawned. Prosperity, a representative house, his own art collection and numerous apprentices showed how much this master was appreciated.

However, his extramarital affairs, fraudulent behavior and bankruptcy made for a very turbulent life. In 1631 Rembrandt decided to move. The young master left Leiden and settled in Amsterdam. Rembrandt moved in with Hendrick Uylenburgh (1587-1661). This art dealer arranged major portrait commissions for him in Amsterdam. In 1634 Rembrandt married Hendrick's rich cousin Saskia Uylenburgh (1612-1642). Saskia was well-connected in Amsterdam's upper classes. Rembrandt and Saskia moved to a house in Nieuwe Doelenstraat. Later on they moved to the 'Suyckerbackerij' (bake house) complex on Binnen-Amstel. In 1639 Rembrandt paid 13,000 Dutch florins for a prominent house in Sint-Anthonisbreestraat, now The Rembrandt House Museum. This was a considerable amount of money for the artist and he was allowed to pay in installments. Rembrandt was well off financially. For the 'Night Watch' he was paid one hundred Dutch florins per individual portrait..

Rembrandt and Saskia had four children, the first three of whom died in infancy. Only Titus (1641-1668) lived past childhood. Saskia died in 1642, when Titus was only nine months old. After Saskia's death, Geertje Dirckx (1600/10-1656) was engaged as Titus's nanny. The Amsterdam people frowned on Rembrandt's extramarital affair with Geertje. It was no coincidence that Rembrandt did not receive any commissions for portraits from Uylenburgh, a Mennonite, in the following ten years!

Geertje and Rembrandt split up in June 1646. Rembrandt had fallen in love with Hendrickje Stoffels, his 22-year-younger housekeeper. Geertje filed a complaint against Rembrandt with the Marriage Council for breaking his promise of marriage. The Council ordered Rembrandt to pay an annual alimony of 200 Dutch florins, as recorded in the marriage quarrel register. Rembrandt showed his less pleasant side. He had Geertje committed to an institution.

In 1654 Hendrickje Stoffels and Rembrandt had a daughter, Cornelia. Hendrickje was officially reprimanded by the church, for her 'sinful conduct with Rembrandt, the painter'. Marriage would have canceled this breach of church rules, however, Rembrandt did not marry Hendrickje.

In spite of the many commissions, the steady income from his etchings and the fees his apprentices paid, difficult times dawned for Rembrandt. His unorthodox way of life lost him favor with the middle classes. Rembrandt did not always honor his price agreements. He often doubled the price that was agreed! It is likely that this kind of behavior gave him a bad name. Because of Rembrandt's passion for collecting - he bought scores of objects d'art, costumes and bric-a-brac - and his expensive house, he had financial difficulties. He was even declared bankrupt in 1656 and his house and collections were auctioned off. Unfortunately, the auction proceeds did not cover the painter's debts.

In 1660 Rembrandt and Hendrickje, Titus and Cornelia moved to a smaller house on Rozengracht. Hendrickje Stoffels and Titus had set up an art store and they employed Rembrandt. This ensured that Rembrandt stayed out of the hands of his creditors. In 1663 Hendrickje died during a plague epidemic. Five years later Titus fell victim to the same disease. Rembrandt died on October 4, 1669. Four days later he was buried in an obscure rented grave of the Westerkerk Church.

The Jewish Bride painting shows an elegantly dressed man and woman in a vague, dark room. The man has lovingly placed his arm around the woman's shoulder and a hand on her breast. Very carefully she touches his hand with her fingertips. Both are staring straight ahead, they seem deep in thought.

The painting became known as the 'Jewish Bride' in the early nineteenth century after the Amsterdam art collector, Van der Hoop, identified the subject of the painting as a Jewish father hanging a necklace around his daughter's neck on her wedding day. Today, no one sees this man as the woman's father anymore. It is clearly a couple, although who they are is not clear.

It is fascinating to see how Rembrandt has employed different techniques in this painting. He has alternated broad strokes with fine lines, thick marks with dry, bristly strokes. The faces and hands have been quite smoothly painted, whereas thick clods of paint have been applied to the canvas for the clothing. In the thick layers of paint on the sleeve the print of the palette knife Rembrandt used to apply the paint is clearly visible. This is how he gave his canvases relief, a characteristic of Rembrandt's later work

When the 'Jewish Bride' was restored in 1993/94, the thick layers of yellowed varnish were removed. Then, there appeared to be something strange about the man's black hat. Beneath a thin layer of black paint a red-brown cap was discovered. Analysis showed that the black paint contained a binding agent (alkyd) that was first used in 1930. Someone other than Rembrandt had therefore applied this paint.

After removing the hat, however, a thin layer of black paint remained which, judging by its composition, could have stemmed from the seventeenth century. Because the circumstances surrounding the hat remained a mystery, it was decided to give him a new one. This has been done in such a way that the addition is easily reversible. The Jewish Bride is on display at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

The Israel Government Coins and Medals Corp. issued a Modelia silver medal of the Jewish Bride.



How the Diamond Industry in Israel Began

Until the Second World War, the diamond invention rested on three legs: production, centered in Africa; distribution, based in London; and diamond cutting, located almost exclusively in Antwerp. The German invasion of Belgium, however, knocked out one of the legs of the tripod-Antwerp. Oppenheimer, leader of the De Beer's cartel, had provided the Belgian cutting factories there with the lion's share of De Beers diamonds, and he could count on them not to resell the diamonds to speculators or other "weak hands." But with the fall of Antwerp, the diamond-cutting industry left De Beers' universe of control.

Since many of the cutters in Antwerp were Jewish, the British-mandated territory of Palestine (Israel) became a natural focal point for the displaced industry. The birth of this new Israeli industry began in 1939 when two Jewish refugees in tattered clothes arrived at the port of Haifa in Palestine. When the customs officer on duty searched through their meager personal belongings, he discovered an envelope containing what looked like hundreds of tiny bits of broken milk glass. He puzzled over them for a moment, and then questioned the refugees about these odd fragments.

The refugees nervously explained that they were both diamond cutters from Antwerp, and the objects in the envelope were, in fact, rough diamonds which they hoped to cut and polish in Palestine. To do this, they told the customs officer they would need a small loan to set up a rudimentary work shop. Did the officer know anyone who might help them, they asked.

The customs officer had never before seen an uncut diamond; indeed, few people in Palestine in 1939 had ever seen one. He therefore took the packet of diamonds to Oved Ben Ami, the mayor of neighboring Natanya. Ben Ami, a short, sprightly man in his early thirties, was one of the most enterprising of the Jewish pioneers in Palestine. A decade earlier, Natanya was nothing but a marsh between Tel Aviv and Haifa, but Ben Ami, fearing that the Arabs might settle there and drive a wedge between the two Jewish cities, decided to found a Jewish settlement there. He put all his energy into raising money and recruiting settlers, and by 1939 he had succeeded in building a small city. It had, however, no industry. On seeing the diamonds, Ben Ami became interested in the possibility of establishing a diamond industry in his town of Natanya, and he asked to see the refugees.

The two men explained to Ben Ami that very little capital was necessary for cutting and polishing diamonds. All that was needed, in fact, was good sunlight, skilled labor, a few rudimentary tools and a supply of rough diamonds. They even demonstrated how a rough diamond was first cleaved, then cut and polished.

Ben Ami was impressed. He provided the men with a building in Natanya for their work and reached into his own pocket and lent them money for their personal expenses. He then did some further research into the diamond business.

Three requisites, sunlight, labor and tools, would be readily available in Palestine; the problem would be acquiring a steady supply of rough diamonds. He consulted a knowledgeable banker in Tel Aviv, and he found out that De Beers controlled virtually the entire world's supply of diamonds. Since the cartel had an agreement with the government of Belgium, which specified that most of the diamonds would be sent to Antwerp to be cut by Belgian labor, this banker advised him that there was little possibility that the cartel would ever allow Palestine to compete with Belgium.

Although discouraged, Ben Ami refused to give up. He had determined that most of the world's diamond business, including the De Beers cartel, was, as he put it, "in Jewish hands," and he persuaded himself that most of these Jews would be sympathetic to the idea of creating a diamond industry in Palestine. He also realized that the Nazi armies were on the verge of overrunning Belgium and the Netherlands, and that many of the Jewish cutters, like the two refugees, might seek refuge in Palestine. He therefore dashed off a series of letters to the mayors of Antwerp and Amsterdam, as well as a number of guild officials in those cities, suggesting that they consider sending their Jewish cutters to Natanya for the duration of the war. He received, however, no reply until mid- 1940.

Ben Ami finally received a letter from a Jewish industrialist in Antwerp. The industrialist, who had obtained Ben Ami's address from the mayor of Antwerp, offered to pay for the relocation of sixty Belgian diamond cutters in Palestine if Ben Ami could arrange the necessary entrance visas. Since the British authorities had placed strict restrictions on the number of Jews allowed to enter Palestine, Ben Ami's first task was to persuade the British to waive these quotas on immigrants. He asked Ben-Gurion, then head of the Jewish Agency, for help. Ben-Gurion's first priority was saving Jews from the nations that had already been overrun by the Germans, and not from neutral countries such as Belgium.

Ben Ami went to the British high commissioner for Palestine. In presenting his case, he argued that since most of the diamonds in the world came from the British Empire, it was in the national interest of Great Britain to make sure that the skilled diamond cutters in Europe were not all captured by the Germans. As there was a distinct possibility that Germany would invade Belgium and Holland in the months ahead, he proposed that the British facilitate the immediate transfer of sixty diamond cutters to Palestine.

After studying the memorandum that Ben Ami had prepared on the subject, the high commissioner agreed that some precautions should be taken to protect the diamond trade. Cutting the tangle of red tape surrounding Jewish immigration to Palestine, he issued Ben Ami sixty visas for Belgian cutters.

The next problem for Ben Ami was persuading De Beers to send a supply of diamonds to Palestine. In London, he consulted Harry Abrams, the managing director of De Beers' Diamond Trading Corporation. Ben Ami made the case that De Beers was about to lose its cutting centers in Antwerp and Amsterdam and it should look to Palestine as an alternative. Abrams coldly replied, "Don't worry about us, Mr. Ben Ami. We have enough cut diamonds in our vault to last through the war ... and then some." Moreover, Abrams explained that De Beers had a binding agreement with the Belgian Government that prevented De Beers from sending diamonds to be cut anywhere else. Diamonds for Palestine were simply "out of the question."

Ben Ami was not so easily put off. He sought out the assistance of Otto Oppenheimer, the brother of Sir Ernest, and appealed to him as a Jew to assist not merely the diamond industry but Palestine. Although Oppenheimer thought Ben Ami presumptuous, he finally wearily gave in and told Ben Ami, "I will be your ambassador and try to persuade De Beers." In fact, Oppenheimer was concerned that Ben Ami was stirring up the Colonial Office about the possible disruption of the diamond trade, and if he persisted, the British government might begin to scrutinize more closely the flow of diamonds around the world. To get rid of this persistent nuisance, Oppenheimer decided with Abrams to provide Ben Ami temporarily with a modest supply of diamonds that could be cut in Palestine.

Ben Ami then flew to Antwerp to recruit the sixty cutters. Even though war with Germany seemed imminent, he found it impossible to persuade the Jewish cutters to go to Palestine. They believed that the Germans, led by General Rommel, were on the verge of capturing

Palestine, and they had no intention of leaving neutral Belgium. They were living in "a paradise of fools," he concluded, and in the end, he managed to recruit only a half dozen cutters.

Ben Ami returned to Natanya considering his mission a failure. He had neither the master cutters nor the amount of diamonds he had hoped to obtain. However, within a week of his return, the Nazi armies blitzkrieged their way through the Low Countries. The British dispatched a destroyer to Antwerp in an attempt to seize the cutters' stocks of diamonds before they fell into German hands, and a few of the Jewish cutters escaped with the British raiding party. But the cutting centers of Antwerp and Amsterdam were lost to the Allies-and De Beers-and Palestine now became an expedient alternative

In early 1941, Ben Ami received a message from George Prins, the broker who represented De Beers, saying that a consignment of diamonds had been allotted to Palestine. Before Ben Ami could receive them, however, he would have to pay ten thousand pounds sterling, which was the value De Beers established for them. Even though this was an enormous sum of money in Palestine in 1941, Ben Ami managed to convince a leading bank to advance it to him for the diamonds, which would serve as collateral. When the diamonds finally arrived in a small cardboard box, Ben Ami distributed them to the few trained diamond cutters. The diamonds themselves were relatively small stones, all less than a carat in weight, even in their uncut state. These meleees, or medium-grade diamonds, required an enormous amount of labor to cut and finish, and had never been highly profitable goods in Antwerp or Amsterdam.

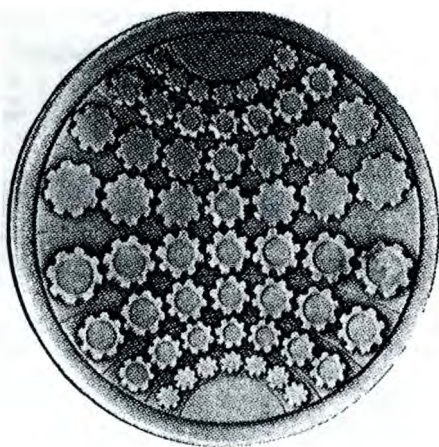
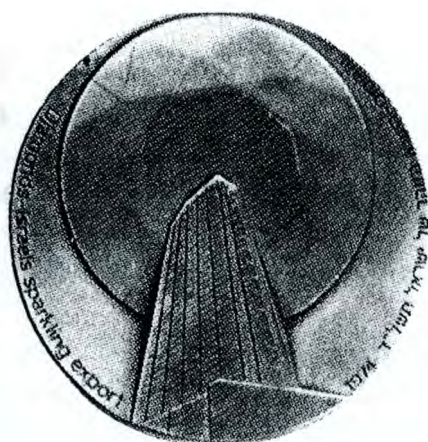
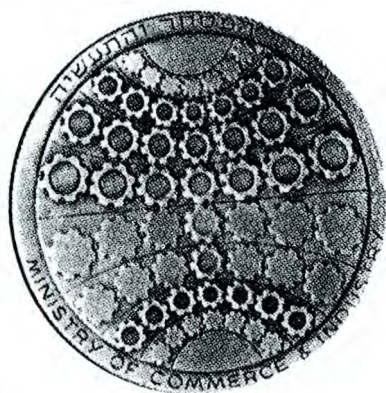
With a flow of Jewish refugees from Europe, Palestine had, however, an abundance of cheap labor. The diamond-cutting factories in Israel were organized along very different lines than those in Antwerp. Instead of assigning the task of cutting and polishing a diamond to a single master craftsman, it was divided among six men. This division of labor, called the "chain of six," made it far easier to train and employ diamond cutters and shortened the time involved in finishing the diamonds. Even though the process resulted in slightly inferior workmanship, the difference, especially on the medium-grade diamonds, was not noticeable to the naked eye.

By the end of the war, Palestine had suddenly become the world's largest manufacturing center for diamonds, in terms of quantity, if not quality. During the war years, no less than 5,000 refugees had been trained as cutters, and De Beers had shipped more than \$100 million

worth of diamonds to Palestine. This is the story of how the diamond industry came to Israel.

In 1974, the Israel Government Coins and Medals Corp. issued a series of medals commemorating industries in Israel. One of the industries commemorated was the diamond industry. Medals were issued in bronze (tombac), silver and gold. There are slight differences in each of the dies. A rare 59mm silver medal was issued solely for the diamond trade officials

Obverse: In the center, a diamond shaped geometric figure, the diamond exchange building, around the rim "Israel's Sparkling e\Export". The reverse shows a seven branched candelabra entwined with the wheels of industry, an expression of Israel's import and export. On some of the gold issues the inner frame around the inscription is missing.

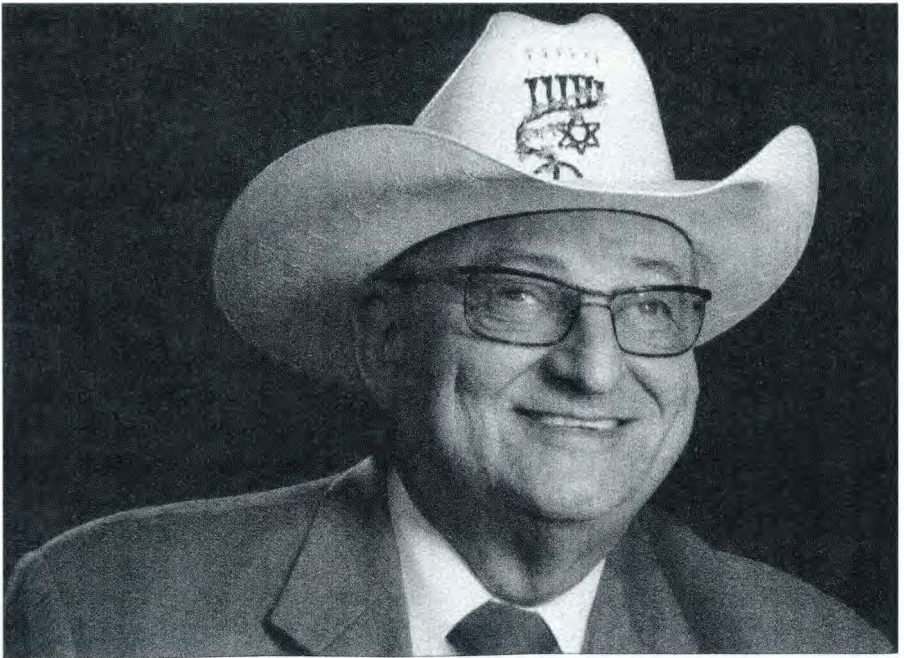


PROFILE OF A MAN WHO BUILT A MUSEUM

Col. Jay M. Ipson was born in Lithuania in 1935 and was 5 years old when the Russians invaded that country. In 1941, Jay and his family were placed in the Kovno Ghetto, which was later designated as a concentration camp in 1943, the same year they managed their first escape, which was cut short by German paratroopers who forced them to return to the Kovno Ghetto. While waiting in a deportation line designated for executions, Jay and his mother were pulled out of line to safety by a Jewish policeman. Several other members of his family, including his mother's father, two brothers and a sister, along with 5000 others, were deported to Estonia and executed. In November of that year, Jay and his parents managed to escape again by cutting some wires, and they survived for six months by living underground in a potato field. Access to this hiding place was through a 10-foot deep potato storage hole. They were liberated by the Russians, managed to escape from them and eventually made their way to the United States in 1947, where they arrived and settled in Richmond, Virginia.

Jay attended the University of Richmond where he studied accounting. In 1954, he joined the Army Reserves and served as an instructor attached to the 2079th Judge Advocate Corp. In 1959 he married Eleanor Gaffen of Montreal, Canada. They have three children and four grandchildren. In business, Jay was the owner of American Auto Parts, operated Hopewell Airport, did aerial photography and photo-work for Hopewell News, and was the weatherman and photographer for WHAP. Jay has received numerous awards for all his volunteer efforts in business, his community and his Synagogue. Jay also became a commercial pilot, logging in more than 3800 hours of flying time and achieved several license ratings. He worked for many years with the Civil Air Patrol and was selected by the Air Force to represent the U. S. in the International Air Cadet Exchange Program and was sent to Israel for 21 days. He was given the opportunity to fly one of Israel's French-made aircraft known as the Nord Atlas 2501. Jay became Deputy Chief of Staff Operations of the Middle East Region Civil Air Patrol and in 1984, was promoted by the Governor to full Colonel with the Virginia Defense Force Aviation Brigade.

Jay has many hobbies. In addition to being a collector of Franklin Mint miniature cars and airplanes, Jay is an amateur photographer and videographer, is an expert marksman and is a collector of coins and stamps, mostly Israel and some WWII. It was during the time when Jay was president of B'nai B'rith that he became a member of AINA. Most of his collection consists of coins and medals of Israel with many relating to his special interests of aviation, military, historical events and holocaust. His stamp collection is mostly WWII, Russian, Polish, German and Israel.



It was in 1997 when two friends encouraged Jay to build a Holocaust museum in Richmond, based on Jay's life experiences. The idea became reality when the museum came to life in a small school building which belonged to Temple Beth El, where all concerned were members of the Synagogue. The Virginia Holocaust Museum quickly became very successful and needed more space to grow. In 2001, the Virginia State Legislature donated a warehouse to house the Museum in an area known as Shockoe Bottom, which was also the area where the first Jewish Community was established during early Virginia development. The warehouse was built in 1889 by the American Tobacco Company and was used as the place to mix tobacco flavors. The Museum features 28 exhibits including "The Ipson Saga" which documents the story of the Ipson family from pre-war Lithuania through their escape and liberation. The Museum has a single mission, "Teaching Tolerance Through Education."

A visitor to the Museum would follow a set of rail tracks that leads to a train station for deportation to Dachau, and then to Kristallnacht, then to the Kovno Ghetto and that is where Jay's story begins. You arrive at the area where the family escaped by cutting the barbed wire, and then arrive out in the country where the family found a hiding place on a farm. You enter the hiding place by crawling through a tunnel that is at the bottom of a 10-foot deep potato hole that leads to a chamber where 13 people lived and survived for 6 months. After leaving the potato hole through an escape tunnel, you enter the section of the Righteous, dedicated to Christians that risked their lives to save Jews. Following this area is the Partisan section and the Children's Memorial in Theresienstadt, which leads to a cattle car for deportation to the gas chambers and the crematorium and that leads to liberation, the DP Camps, and the Exodus, Cyprus, Palestine/Israel, the Place of Justice (an exact replica of the Nuremberg courtroom and officially opened May 1, 2008), the Kovno Choe Shul (a full-sized synagogue from Kovno, one of the best known and ornate synagogues in Lithuania), the Tower of Remembrance and the Survivor's Room, where one can sit for quiet meditation and reflection. The library has over 5,000 books that can be used by researchers and over 100 holocaust video interviews. There are also multi-purpose rooms at the Museum where one can view a video presentation of local survivors (filmed in 1987), listen to a lecture, or have lunch. "Through tours, programs, lectures, films and other events, the Museum strives to educate the public and promote tolerance towards all, regardless of religion, nationality, race, sex or creed."

Written by Donna J. Sims, NLG

(Upon reading Jay's story, I truly believed it an important one to tell and I hope I have written about Jay, his life, his background and about the Museum with the justice it all so well deserves.)

The Great Plunder of Safed

By Eliezer Rivlin, Jerusalem

What has been said repeatedly in journals and books-- that until 1920 there were no pogroms against the Jews of the land of Israel -- is a mistake. For there have been such as these decades and centuries ago, even before the English conquered the land. The Jews have called it "looting" or "plunder" (in Arabic "nahib"). In the chronicles of the Jewish community, the "plunder" and the earthquake of 1837 are the most shocking events.

The plunder erupted in Safed along with the revolt of the Arabs of the land of Israel against Muhammad Ali, the governor of Egypt, who took the land from the Turks and the government of Kushta (Istanbul) in 1834. He imposed mandatory military duty on all Muslim inhabitants of the land of Israel. This was something that they were fiercely against.

The first to call for a revolt were the people of Nablus, by the command of their minister Kassam Lakhama. They were joined by fellahin from the nearby villages, and rose upon Jerusalem to conquer it and take it out of the hands of the governor of Egypt. On 22 Iyyar, (May 31), the rebels occupied Jerusalem and took control of the city. The fear among the Jews was great, for, according to Arab tradition, plunder is allowed during rebellion. And those breaking in already began looting and plundering.

But to their rescue came the head of the rebels, who declared in the streets of Jerusalem that, *"the Arabs, the Jews and the Christians are brothers and the one who touches any of them shall be put to death."* This severe command was helpful in saving the lives and properties of the Jews and Christians in the Jerusalem. And after a week, on 28 Iyyar (June 3), came Ibrahim Pasha, the general of Muhammad Ali, to Jerusalem, and a large force with him, and the rebels fled the city.

Very bad was the fate of Safed, which had the largest Hebrew community in the land. All other communities in the land, including the one in Jerusalem, were its subordinates. There were about 2,000 Jews then in Safed. The governor of the city of Safed aided the rebels, and the Jews of Safed bore the brunt of the guilt of Muhammad Ali and his government. The Jews became the target for rebels from within the city of Safed and from the surrounding villages and towns.

The rebellion in Safed was declared on 8 of Sivan (June 15, 1834). From all the nearby towns and villages Arabs and Bedouins came to the city drunk from revolt and began delivering havoc on the Jews. With large and small shields, lances and rifles, the first thing they did was to attack the Jews. They stripped the clothing from men and women, tore pillows and

featherbeds, and spread the feathers around, tore Bible books, raped a man and a woman, destroyed houses and synagogues, and murdered many people from Israel.

Gentiles came to the domain of the Lord, in the little holiness of our temples and synagogues, and defiled the chamber of our holiness and threw all our cherished books of the Torah to the ground. They tortured righteous women upon them, and all holiness of our homes, phylacteries (tefilin) and doorpost (mezuzah) looted and plundered. And they took leather from the Bible books to make straps for their horses and shoes for their feet... they destroyed our homes, beating the Jews blows of death. And many of them became blind and invalids, and from among them, several souls died strange deaths.

Many of the Jews fled immediately to the near and the faraway fields and mountains, outside the city, many among them naked and barefoot. Others ran to the synagogues to die a holy death there. The eruption of the rebellion came suddenly and caused much panic. Home dwellers fled in many directions, the husband ran to the field outside the city, the infant stayed lying in the cradle, and the mother in her hideout – and the cries of the miserable tore the heavens.

The rebellion continued for thirty-three days, and all that time the Jews were persecuted inside and outside the city, and they were not allowed to come out of their hideouts. The exceptions were those individuals, who by acquaintances and friendship, or by giving large amounts of money, found refuge for themselves and their family members in the homes of Ishmaelites (Arabs) and in the homes of Christians. The refugees who were outside the city, and in the fields under the open sky, suffered greatly from the great cold in the mountains of Safed, and the harsh dew in this part of the country. And their hearts dropped from fear at the sound of the rebels' cries and debauchery.

Holy and heroic Jews, heroes of strength and courage of heart, gave their lives for the sanctity of the Lord and the duty of the city and community and did not leave the city nor ask for hideouts, and the outlaw murdering bandits trampled them down. Beseechers and public activists were found, who gave their lives helping their brothers who were in great distress. And they pleaded in every way they could to ease the misery and to end the situation. They fed the hungry, returned babies to the bosoms of their mothers, buried the dead, dressed the wounded, bribed the Gentiles, and pleaded by way of messengers and letters to the consuls and authorities in Acre and Beirut. They even gathered and hid the remnants of the books and phylacteries and doorposts, which the savages desecrated.

After the initial days of panic passed, a rescuer came to the Jews of Safed. This was Rabbi Israel of Shklov, who, from his hideout at Ein Zeitim, with sums of money and gaining the heart of the sheik of the village, was able to get into his service fellahin who went to the city and mounted on their donkeys the sick and wounded that lay out in the streets. And with the fellahin coming into the city, came in also Jews dressed as fellahin and they took out money that they hid before leaving the city.

In each day that past the rebels who conquered the city were afraid that the army of Ibrahim Pasha would come, take vengeance on them and put an end to their misdeeds. They were also concerned about attacks from savage Bedouins and other villagers from nearby who demanded a share in the loot they took from the Jews. And this fear did not give them the strength to unleash all their fury on the Jews. And in one of the days of riots the rebels gathered to a public meeting and there were found among them some who wanted to benefit the Jews, and they sent messengers to the markets and streets declaring "taman," meaning the riots are over.

And the Jews were about to return to the town, but very quickly they had found out that it was not the opinion of the majority of the rebels. And they attacked the Jews again on the road, forcing them to return to their hideouts and lie in the vineyard and in the ruins. During the thirty-three days of the riots the Jewish community was dwindled and ruined. Many were beaten to death and fell in the open streets, many were severely wounded, their eyes blinded, men and women were tortured. Thirteen synagogues the Jews had in Safed, and in them five hundred books of the Torah, and all were destroyed. The homes of the Jews were emptied, and many were destroyed down to their foundations, because the bandits searched them for treasures of gold and silver. The printing press of Rabbi Israel Beck, which was in those days the only printing press in the entire land of Israel, with all its publication, the five books of the Pentateuch, and other books were destroyed and burned. Most of the Jews were left without a robe to cover their skin.

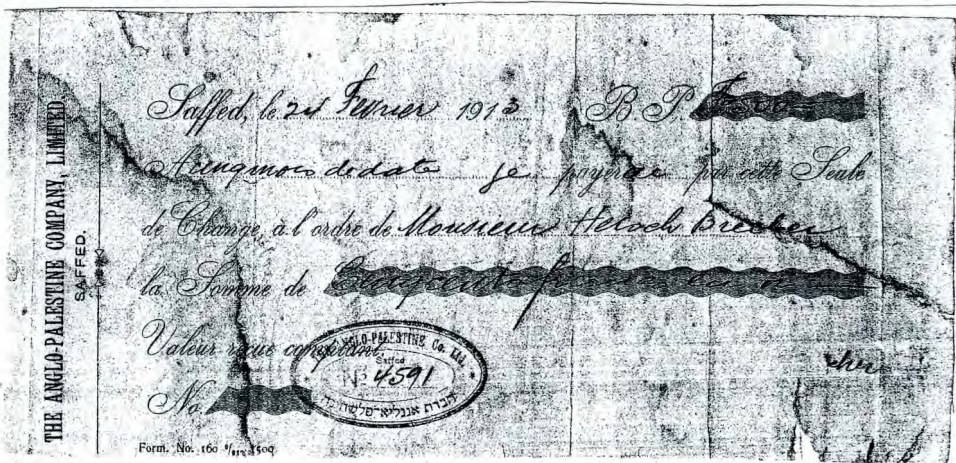
With great efforts Rabbi Israel of Shklov sent from his hideout letters to the consuls of foreign states in Beirut and informed them of the details of the troubles that befell the Jews, many of whom were the subjects of foreign states. The consuls encouraged Ibrahim Pasha to come to Safed, repress the rebellion and save the Jews from eradication. Ibrahim Pasha sent the emir of the Druze, Emir Bashir, from the Lebanon to the Galilee, and on 10 Tamuz (July 17) the emir came to the gates of Safed with a large force and repressed the revolt.

Most of the rebels fled, and their leaders were caught and put to death in the open streets. And the Jews of Safed had a relief, they returned to their homes and gathered their few remaining belongings. The consuls tried

to raise sums of money as compensation for their subjects and made lists of the damages, but the victims received only seven percent of the value of the damage.

In the month of Tevet (January 1,) 1837 there came upon Safed the great quake, and in Tamuz 1838 came a second plunder, and these three blows destroyed the Jewish community in Safed. But not many days later the Jews renewed the settlement of Safed with hope, that "God shall build the Galilee."

The article is illustrated with a rare Anglo Palestine Company, Limited bank check from the Safed office, dated 24th February, 1913, which is in your editor's collection. The check is made payable to Hersch Brecher. Hersh Brecher was the Rothschild's representative for all his philanthropic affairs in the Holy Land. The language of the check is French which was the language used in most financial transactions. The emergency registered checks issued in Safed have Hebrew inscriptions not found on checks issued by the bank in Jaffa.



The Knights of St. John of Jerusalem

In 1090 Malta became a dependency of the Kingdom of Sicily. In the next three hundred years, the Jewish population of the archipelago reached a peak it was never to attain again. Many Jews were shopkeepers or traders, but it was not unusual for them to own agricultural land, and many prospered. They lived side by side with their Christian neighbors and were not confined to ghettos. But they were burdened by the obligation to provide rich gifts each year to high office-holders.

To defend the archipelago threatened by the Ottoman Turks, Charles V of Spain offered Malta to the Knights of Saint John of Jerusalem (1530). Remembering the relatively liberal policy followed by the Knights towards the Jews of Rhodes, many of the (Jewish) Sicilians "conversos" as the forcibly converted Jews were known - who kept the Jewish religion at home but outwardly appeared acted as Catholics - decided to settle in Malta.

After their installation in Malta, the Knights who had a fleet of galleys, launched out, like the Turks, in the taking of hostages and their release against ransom. The Jewish merchants, who were about the only ones to ensure their risk and dangers the exchanges between two banks of the Mediterranean, were particularly aimed.

During the reign of the Knights of St. John, the only Jews (with a few exceptions) who lived in Malta were slaves. A prison to hold these Jewish slaves had been built with this intention in Valletta. The Knights waged continual maritime warfare, hardly distinguishable from piracy, against the Moslem powers. Seaports were raided and their inhabitants carried off. Shipping was preyed on indiscriminately, captured vessels being brought to Malta, and crew and passengers sold into captivity. Throughout the rule of the Knights, which lasted until they capitulated to the French in 1798, the islands were thus a last European refuge of slave traffic and slave labor.

The victims were any persons, of whatever standing, race, age or sex, who happened to be sailing on the captured ships. Jews made up a large proportion of the Levantine merchant class and were peculiarly subject to capture. Because of their nomadic way of life, disproportionately large numbers were to be found in any vessel sailing the Eastern ports. They also formed a considerable element in the population of the Moslem ports subject to raids. So, soon after the establishment of the Knights in Malta, the name of Malta begins to be found with increasing frequency in Jewish literature, and always with an evil association.

The islands became in Jewish eyes a symbol for all that was cruel and hateful in the Christian world. Whatever the truth of the contemporary rumor that the Jews financed the great Turkish siege of Malta in 1565, certainly they watched with anxious eyes and their disappointment at its failure must have been great. "The monks of Malta are still today a snare and trap for the Jews", sadly records a Jewish chronicler at the end of his account of the siege. A messianic prophecy current early in the seventeenth century further expressed the bitterness of the Jewish feeling, recounting how the Redemption would begin with the fall of the four kingdoms of "ungodliness", first amongst which was Malta.

A typical capture, and one of the earliest mentioned in Jewish literature, is related in the "Vale of Tears" by Joseph ha-Cohen: *'In the year 5312 (1552), the vessels of the monks of Rhodes, of the order of Malta, cruising to find booty, encountered a ship coming from Salonica, wheron where seventy Jews. They captured it and returned to their island. These unhappy persons had to send to all quarters to collect money for the ransom exacted by these miserable monks. Only after payment were they able to continue their voyage.'* In 1567, large numbers of Jews, escaping to the Levant from the persecution of Pius V, fell victims to the Knights. "Many of the victims drowned in the depths of the sea before the fury of the attack. Many others were imprisoned in the Maltese dungeons at this time of desolation," writes the chronicler. It was not only those who went down to the sea in ships over whom the shadow hung. Of the Marranos (Crypto-Jews) of Ancona who fell victims to the fanaticism of Paul IV, thirty-eight who eluded the stake were sent in chains to the galleys of Malta, though they managed to escape on the way.

On arriving in Malta, the captives were only at the beginning of their troubles. A very graphic account of conditions is given by the English traveller, Philip Skippon, who visited the spot in about 1663:

'The slaves' prison is a fair square building, cloister'd round where most of the slaves in Malta are oblig'd to lodge every night, and to be there about Ave Mary time. They have here several sorts of trades, as barbers, tailors etc. . There are about 2,000 that belong to the order, most of which were now abroad in the galleys; and there are about three hundred who are servants to private persons. This place being an island, and difficult to escape out of, they wear only an iron ring or foot-lock. Those that are servants, lodge in their masters' houses, when the galleys are at home; but now, lie a-nights in this prison. Jews, Moors and Turks are made slaves here, and are publicly sold in the market. 'A stout

fellow may be bought (if he is an inferior person) for 120 or 160 scudi of Malta. The Jews are distinguish'd from the rest by a little piece of yellow cloth on their hats or caps, &c. We saw a rich Jew who was taken about a year before, who was sold in the market that morning we visited the prison for 400 scudi; and supposing himself free, by reason of a passport he had from Venice, he struck the merchant that bought him; where-upon he was presently sent hither, his beard and head were shaven off, a great chain clapp'd on his legs, and bastinado'd with 50 blows.'

The mechanism of release was not always simple. The Jew was rarely as rich as he was reputed to be, but his reputation for wealth was greatest precisely where he was least known. The usual price standard of a slave was tended, therefore to disappear whenever a Jew was concerned. He was worth not his value but whatever could be extorted from his brethren ransom degenerated into blackmail.

Fifteen centuries earlier, the rabbis of the Talmud had realized that this was a case in which it was necessary to turn for once a deaf ear to suffering, lest a premium be put on the enslavement of Jews. They ordained, accordingly, that no captive be ransomed for more than his economic value. This was a rule to obey which was hard for Jews, "compassionate sons of compassionate sires," and generally the price paid for a Jew was higher by far than that of a Moslem. On occasion, the Jews were mercilessly exploited. While waiting for their repurchase they were allowed to work downtown to make ends meet. They could sell in the streets, but before evening they had to return to the prison.

1798 was a blessing for the Jewish nation living in Malta! On the road to Egypt, Napoleon Bonaparte seized the archipelago and applied the laws of the French Republic, i.e. equality and the abolition of slavery. Finally the Jews became free men in Malta. No longer did they have to wear the shameful distinguishing round red circle on their clothes nor if they so desired could they no longer shave their beards. The community of the Jews of Malta could reconstitute itself again as freemen. Nothing changed in this respect when two years later the English drove out the French. Indeed Valletta became an important stopover on the road to the Middle and Far East. Several Jews from Gibraltar immigrated to Malta and established business concerns. They were soon followed by Jews coming from North Africa and other Mediterranean cities.

In 1998, the number of local "Maltese" Jewish families who identify themselves as Sepharadim (coming originally from Spain), as against the Ashkenazim (coming from Eastern Europe) do not exceed thirty families, reduced sometimes to one or to two individuals, generally old. Most are

Polypots speaking several languages Others - the Ashkenazim are people installed here for a few years, the time of a contract with a multinational. Some are refugees, Lebanese Jews, Factory Owners, tradesmen, British pensioners. And what not .They meet twice every month for the celebration of the Shabbat - there are usually between fourteen to twenty men . They celebrate the Jewish festivals and also organize a communal seder (celebration of Passover) in a local restaurant every year, attended by all the Jews who have no family or relatives living in Malta.

The community boasts of three Jewish cemeteries in Malta. The oldest, that of Kalkara, goes back to the XVIII century. Most of the inscriptions are in Italian - for the oldest - perhaps there was nobody to write in Hebrew. On the other hand, the most recent ones are in Hebrew. Some, which date from the First World War, are in French: dedicated to the soldiers fallen at the time of the war of the Dardanelles. In these holy grounds lie side by side Jews who escaped from concentration camps, from Budapest or from Tunis, Oran or a German village. It is in this Jewish ground, away from the promised land, that they met their destiny..

Inside an unobtrusive apartment house on narrow St. Ursula street, Valletta, in an unmarked ground floor flat, simply furnished with several rows of straight-backed chairs, is a synagogue. A minyan (Jews pray in a congregation of at least 10 Adult males over 13 years of age) drawn from Malta's hundred or so Jews gather here every first and third Shabbat of each month for morning service and on holidays. Saturday morning at the synagogue on St. Ursula street - the atmosphere was always welcoming and intimate. When any worshipper arrives he / she is greeted warmly by the congregants already inside.

The numismatic illustration for this article was found on Ebay. It is a 1747 Grano coin of the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem in Malta.



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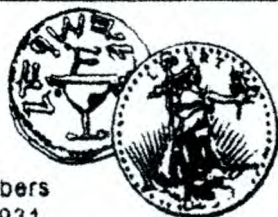
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